

Davis, Ford contest GOP primary race

Davis draws primary challenge for New Hanover House seat

By Hunter Ingram

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NEW HANOVER COUNTY — The Republican primary for N.C. Rep. Ted Davis' District 19 seat will be a head-to-head contest between Davis and challenger Hunter Ford.

Davis has held the seat since being appointed in 2012, while Ford is a political newcomer and local business owner. This year is the first time since the 2012 election that Davis has faced an opponent. The winner of the primary contest will go onto the regular election in November, where they will face off with Democratic candidate Marcia Morgan and Libertarian David Perry, neither of whom faced a primary challenge. The seat has a base salary of \$13,951, plus \$559 per month for expenses. Members of the General Assembly selected to top leadership positions can earn higher salaries.

Early voting ends May 5. Primary Election Day is May 8.

Where do you stand on additional funding for beach nourishment in the Cape Fear region?

Davis: As a former county commissioner, and since being a state legislator, I have always supported an established funding source for beach nourishment, as well as shallow inlet dredging, because tourism and water-related activities are such an important economic engine for our coastal area.

Ford: Without tourism, our coastal community would not exist. As a candidate, I'm not in favor of raising taxes to rebuild our beaches, but I am in favor of protecting the distribution of tax funds that are already allocated to protecting tourism. I will work hard in the General Assembly to protect property owner's rights statewide to rent their private residences through short-term rentals to help fund projects like beach nourishment to avoid adding additional taxes to an already-overburdened taxpayer.

Do you think more needs to be done to rectify the reputation of the local film industry as it struggles to rebound?

Davis: I have been a leading proponent for the film industry, which has a huge financial impact in our area. I successfully lobbied for the \$31 million recurring funding for the present grant program. But more needs to be done and I am

continuing to work with the local film studio and film commission to do what is necessary to bring projects back to Wilmington.

Ford: I will introduce a bill on the first day I enter the General Assembly to reinstate an incentive program at 20 percent for the next 10 years. The sales tax generated from filming in Wilmington is distributed throughout the state. As a business owner, I pay 4.75 percent in state sales tax and 2.25 percent in New Hanover County sales tax every month. Film in North Carolina benefits the entire state, not just Wilmington.

What do you think is the next step in addressing the GenX issue in the state?

Davis: As the Senior Chairman of the House River Quality

Committee, I introduced HB189, which included all of the necessary funding requested by DEQ to address the GenX issue. It passed the House unanimously. The next step is for the Senate to agree with the House on this funding. I am presently working with the Senate to accomplish that goal in the legislative short session that begins in May.

Ford: As an elected official in the General Assembly I will hold corporations and individuals accountable for any illegal dumping. When the Gulf oil spill happened eight years ago, BP was responsible for cleaning up the spill and compensating punitive damages. I will not allow illegal dumping in our rivers. The illegal actions of (Chemours) will not be passed down to the taxpayers to rectify. I will not allow this to mirror the coal ash cleanup that Duke Power has passed down to its customers to pay for.

Would you support a tax increase if the money was used for issues important to the citizens?

Davis: I do not support raising taxes. Since I have been in Raleigh, both personal and corporate tax rates have been reduced. I would look for other funding sources to be used for issues that are important to the citizens.

Ford: I will not support any tax increases while holding office in North Carolina's General Assembly. The citizens of North Carolina are already overburdened with out of control spending and I will fight to reduce taxes in every sector of the budget. Republicans and Democrats are guilty of wasteful spending and its time for the General Assembly to maintain a balanced budget and spend taxpayer dollars on what's necessary, not for what's wanted to win individual re-elections.

Is the region's growth moving too quickly for local governments to successfully sustain and support it?

Davis: We are fortunate to live in an area that is so attractive that people want to move here, but as a result of that growth, we struggle with traffic congestion. On the state level, I will continue to support DOT being fully funded and for their decision making process to be based upon actual need rather than politics.

Ford: Wilmington's population is predicted to double in the next 10 years. Elected officials are faced with a huge task to appropriate funds and listen to advice from experts on how to sustain and support this growth successfully. Local government can handle this growth if elected official work together and leave their personal agendas at the door when they go to work for the people. I don't believe it's the growth that can interrupt successful sustainability, its politicians with agendas that refuse to work with opposing opinions that will make growth a struggle.

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